



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

November 26, 2007

Mr. Joseph Christopher
Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment (MMS 5410)
Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394

Subject: Gulf of Mexico Oil and Gas Lease Sale 224, Eastern Planning Area Final
Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. CEQ: 20070462;
ERP: MMS-E02011-00

Dear Mr. Christopher:

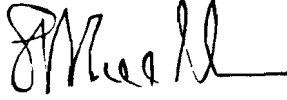
Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 has reviewed the Minerals Management Service's (MMS) Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that addresses the proposed Lease Sale.

EPA appreciates the responses to our comments on the Draft SEIS, along with the additional information and revisions made in the text reporting on studies published in 2006. EPA has found the responses and revisions to the text to be informative. Overall, our concerns have been adequately addressed; however, we are requesting some further clarification on two of our comments. The MMS response to the USEPA-3 comment which discusses a laboratory bioassay of drill site sediments that indicates a positive correlation between sediment toxicity and Synthetic Based Fluid concentrations. We recommend that additional field investigations be considered, and be designed to document sediment toxicities before and after drilling discharges, and SBF biodegradation.

In regard to the USEPA-5 comment about natural gas pipeline damage and spills, the MMS response addresses the potential impacts to the marine environment. This response does not answer the second part of the comment about why damage to gas pipelines is not included in the tabulation of spills, or indicate where else a tabulation of documented damage can be found. Overall, it is essential for MMS to continue to maintain a thorough and up-to-date documentation of pipeline condition, damage, and causal factors.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Final SEIS. If EPA may be of further assistance, please contact me at 404/562-9611 (mueller.heinz@epa.gov) or Ted Bisterfeld on my staff at 404/562-9621 (bisterfeld.ted@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Mueller", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Heinz J. Mueller
Chief, NEPA Program Office

cc: National Marine Fisheries Service, St. Petersburg